United Nations A/C.4/66/SR.8

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr. General
30 January 2012

Original : English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 12 October 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Miculescu ..... (Romania)

Contents

Agenda item 51: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

11-54093 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 51: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/C.4/66/20 and A/C.4/66/L.2)

1. **Mr. Srivali** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that space science and technology were an integral part of modern life and had made possible advances in telecommunications, broadcasting and weather mapping. For developing countries, the application of space technologies could contribute significantly to development in terms of improving living conditions, conserving and managing natural resources, and enhancing preparedness for natural disasters. ASEAN encouraged the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to continue to explore ways to integrate space technologies into the implementation of the recommendations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. ASEAN looked forward to cooperation and capacity-building at the annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF).

2. The ASEAN Subcommittee on space technology and application (SCOSA) was formulating a framework to increase the use of space technology in disaster management. SCOSA and its remote sensing partner had provided valuable data during a number of natural disasters in the region, which had contributed significantly to mitigation and relief efforts. ASEAN was also working to create its own Earth-observation satellite by 2015 to provide high-quality data for research and early warning.

3. ASEAN welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) regional support offices. It commended countries that had voluntarily set up and funded the regional offices and encouraged others in a position to do so to follow suit. It welcomed the continued work of UN-SPIDER in developing the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, to use space-based information to support disaster management.

4. It was important to bear in mind the inherent risks of space technology and maintain vigilance. The fall of the upper atmosphere research satellite in September 2011 had revealed gaps in the ability to predict when and where the pieces would land. While the probability of space objects falling in populated areas was slim, the number of ageing satellites suggested that there were likely to be similar incidents. The increasing number of space objects in orbit, including space debris, gave cause for concern, and highlighted the importance of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines. It was also important to prepare for the possibility of collisions between satellites and other space objects.

5. Speaking as the representative of Thailand, he reaffirmed his Government's commitment to cooperation with the Outer Space Committee. Thailand also hoped to collaborate further with other organizations, including APRSAF, the Group on Earth Observations and the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites. Thailand had organized numerous training events and conferences on satellite communication, and had used satellite communication for various purposes, including distance learning in education projects. To support capacity-building in space law, Thailand had co-organized a Workshop on Space Law in Bangkok in November 2010, where vital recommendations and observations had been made.

6. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation supported all initiatives aimed at halting the militarization of outer space and endorsed the principles of equal and non-discriminatory access to outer space and equal conditions for all States, irrespective of their level of scientific, technical and economic development, and non-appropriation of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, by claim of sovereignty, use, occupation or any other means. It also commended the emphasis placed by the Outer Space Committee on the use of data obtained from Earth observation satellites in sustainable development activities, on non-discriminatory access to remote-sensing data and information, and on capacity-building for developing countries in the use of remote-sensing technology for development and scientific purposes.

7. His country's General Organization for Remote Sensing played a significant role in developing the national economy through its implementation of various scientific, environmental and other projects. Recent examples included mapping of the country's volcanic and seismic hazards using remote-sensing technologies and a survey of its natural and agricultural resources using geographic information systems. It had

also entered into several cooperation agreements with international and Arab bodies, in which context it was engaged in a number of joint projects and sought to strengthen cooperation in such vital areas as information exchange and training.

8. The devastating human and material losses from natural disasters underscored the need for intensified efforts to establish a global disaster-management system supported by space-based information. To that end, the experience of UN-SPIDER would be invaluable. Developed countries should share with developing countries their know-how in space technology and allow them access to data at an affordable cost and in a timely and non-discriminatory manner. The United Nations Programme on Space Applications should also continue its assistance to developing countries and countries in economic transition in order to enable them to participate in and benefit from the space activities outlined in the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III). All outer space activities contributing to socio-economic development and prosperity must, however, be implemented with respect for the sovereign rights of States, including the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs. In short, international cooperation for the peaceful uses of outer space must be enhanced as a matter of urgent priority in the interest of fostering greater peace, stability and progress for the benefit of humanity.

9. **Mr. Benashur** (Libya) said that the Outer Space Committee played an important role in shaping international standards for space activities and strengthening international cooperation for the development of an international legal regime governing space activities with a view to addressing such concerns as the militarization of outer space and preservation of the space environment. In that regard, the Scientific and Technical and Legal Subcommittees should intensify their efforts to elaborate an international legal instrument covering, inter alia, the use, definition and delimitation of outer space.

10. The exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes must remain consistent with the principles enunciated in article I of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. Cooperation must also be enhanced between spacefaring and non-spacefaring countries, as well as between the former and international and non-governmental organizations, in order to promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise concerning space science and the use of space for peaceful purposes in a non-competitive manner. A welcome forum in that regard was the annual Space Generation Congress, which played a key part in engaging young people's interest in the subject.

11. The use of nuclear power sources in outer space should be as limited as possible and the States concerned should provide the Outer Space Committee with comprehensive and transparent information on measures taken to ensure the safety of the terrestrial and space environments. Scientific forecasts of the long- and short-term risks associated with such use must also be studied and disseminated. The Outer Space Committee should furthermore continue to develop its Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines and the Scientific and Technical and Legal Subcommittees should cooperate more closely in order to elaborate binding legal rules on space debris mitigation.

12. In the light of its connection with development and taking into account the consequences of climate change and natural disasters, the sustainability of space science activities was of universal interest. Developed countries should therefore be ready to share information relating to the safety of planet Earth, to which end effective early warning systems were particularly indispensable to disaster mitigation. The current workplan for the UN-SPIDER programme was especially relevant in that context, as were the Outer Space Committee's efforts to enhance cooperation with various Earth observation programmes around the globe. The discussions on the theme "Space and education" were useful to promoting youth participation in space science and technology, but the Outer Space Committee should systematically seek to increase awareness-raising and other activities, including in conjunction with education ministries, with the aim of attracting young people to the field of space science. As part of its efforts to enrich the current International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", the Outer Space Committee should also focus on enhancing the use of space-derived water in water management programmes.

13. Under the previous regime, Libya's space-related activities had not been optimized for the benefit of the country and it had made none of the scientific contributions to humanity that it was undoubtedly well-

resourced enough to make. Efforts would therefore be newly directed towards breaking new ground in the area of space science and technology in the interest of developing and building the new democratic Libya.

14. **Mr. Horikawa** (Japan) said that on behalf of his Government he would like to express deep appreciation for all the support given in the days and months since the March 2011 earthquake. Global navigation satellite systems had contributed significantly to the search, rescue and restoration efforts carried out following the earthquake. Satellite images provided by Sentinel Asia had also supported rescue efforts.

15. Japan attached great importance to the work of APRSAF as one model for regional space cooperation. It would continue to promote the activities of the Sentinel Asia initiative for disaster management. In September 2011, Japan had hosted the sixth meeting of the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems.

16. Japan had contributed to the International Space Station (ISS) programme since its inception. The experimental module *Kibo*, or "hope", was conducting various on-orbit experiments. Japanese astronaut Satoshi Furukawa was scheduled to return to Earth in November 2011, while in 2013 Koichi Wakata would become the first Asian astronaut to serve as an ISS commander. In July 2011, three additional Japanese astronauts had qualified to serve on ISS. The H-II transfer vehicle had successfully conducted its second mission to supply ISS, and a third mission was being scheduled for 2012. Japan was also preparing to launch the first satellite for the Global Change Observation Mission, for the observation of global climate change and water circulation.

17. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that while satellite applications could make a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of all countries, space activities must be carried out in a manner compatible with the sovereign rights of States, including the principle of non-intervention, as enshrined in the relevant United Nations instruments. International endeavours to promote the peaceful uses of outer space could be successful only if fully supported by initiatives to prevent an arms race in outer space.

18. His Government attached high priority to capacity-building, which played an essential role in the sustainable development of space technology. It had hosted regional workshops and symposiums on space law, applications of space science and technology, and disaster management. Furthermore, it would be hosting a United Nations regional workshop on the use of space technology for human health improvement in October 2011. Iran had actively contributed to the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Space Coordination Organization (APSCO). The establishment of a UN-SPIDER regional support office in the country had made his Government an active regional partner with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

19. His Government made significant advances in space science and technology based on its own capability. It had inaugurated a space structure laboratory and an aerospace exhibition centre in 2011; the centre was the largest of its kind in the Middle East. Four satellites and a satellite carrier had been unveiled in February 2011. Two domestically manufactured fixed ground stations and one mobile station for receiving remote-sensing images had also been unveiled. A satellite carrier had been test launched in March 2011 and was likely to be launched soon with a biolife capsule. Finally, a national satellite launch vehicle site had been established, and several student satellite projects had been carried out.

20. **Mr. Pintado** (Mexico) said that the principle of equal access to outer space for all States, regardless of their level of economic or technological development, should continue to be the basis of the work of the United Nations on the topic of outer space. Regional and international cooperation were essential in that regard. His Government therefore supported regional initiatives to strengthen the universal use of exploration of outer space. In 2010, it had hosted the Sixth Space Conference of the Americas on the topic: Space and development: space application at the service of humanity and for the development of the Americas. The Space Conferences of the Americas sought to align positions on issues of common interest in respect of the peaceful uses of outer space, to agree on strategies to promote the practical use of space applications in support of regional socio-economic programmes, to promote the development of space legislation, and to strengthen education and training programmes in space science and technology.

21. The Sixth Conference had helped strengthen the participation of the academic, private and public sectors, as well as youth and non-governmental organizations, in regional and international space

science and technology programmes in support of economic, social, cultural and scientific development. A space camp and a youth forum had been organized to keep young people informed about the work of the Conference. The Conference had also supported the establishment of the Mexican space agency and the collaboration of academic institutions with the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Latin America and the Caribbean.

22. The Pachuca Declaration, adopted at the end of the Conference, outlined the principal elements of regional space policy, emphasizing the commitment of the participants to accede to the international space treaties and conventions in order to strengthen the legal and institutional frameworks and encourage exploration, research and the peaceful uses of space technology. His Government would be heading the pro tempore secretariat of the Conference for a period of three years, and would work to implement the commitments contained in the Pachuca Declaration.

23. **Mr. Zhou** Lipeng (China) said that China's space industry continued its dynamic momentum. The global networking project of the BeiDou navigation satellite system continued to make steady progress and would soon complete the regional navigation system to provide services for the Asia-Pacific region. China had successfully launched *Tiangon*-I, the first step in its space station programme, in September 2011. His Government also attached great importance to the conversion of space technology into practical applications, including mapping, fisheries, transportation, meteorology and disaster prevention and reduction.

24. Space exploration and use should aim to achieve inclusive development so as to benefit all peoples regardless of their country's ability to participate in space activities. In view of the increasing congestion of the space environment, the strain on space resources and the threats to the long-term sustainable development of space activities, his Government maintained that outer space activities should be conducted in harmony with the space environment and in line with sustainable development, so as to make space exploration and exploitation environmentally friendly. Second, it believed that all countries had an equal right to the peaceful uses of outer space and every person in the world was entitled to benefit from the efficiency and comfort provided by space technology; great efforts were therefore needed to enable those countries which were not yet space-capable to participate in space programmes so that space exploration and exploitation would benefit all countries. Third, while the rapid development of commercial launching and space tourism enabled more people to experience outer space, it was important to enable the people of less developed countries to experience space exploration.

25. Inclusive development meant that all space-faring parties should enjoy equal opportunities and share benefits; that countries should make common progress through mutually beneficial cooperation; and that all civilizations should come together in mutual accommodation and man and nature should co-exist in harmony. It was only by upholding international cooperation based on equality and mutual benefit, openness and inclusiveness, that inclusive development could be achieved. International cooperation had been essential to the success of space exploration and exploitation. Outer space law was an essential guarantee for preventing the weaponization of outer space and achieving sustainable development; the inclusive development of outer space required continued international cooperation and the steady advancement of the rule of law in outer space. China reaffirmed its commitment to the inclusive development of outer space characterized by peace, development, cooperation and the rule of law.

26. **Mr. Kalinin** (Russian Federation) recalled that just over 50 years ago, on 12 April 1961, the Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin had been the first human being in space. 2011 also marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Outer Space Committee. His delegation welcomed the proclamation of 12 April as the "International Day of Space Flight".

27. Every year, the international cooperation that was essential to the vital goal of ensuring that outer space was used exclusively for peaceful purposes involved a greater number of participants. While that was welcome, it also highlighted the need to prevent the militarization of outer space and its pollution by space debris, as well as to take a responsible attitude to research in space, as key aspects of ensuring sustainable benefits of its utilization for mankind as a whole.

28. The Russian Federation attached priority to such areas of cooperation as remote sensing of Earth, the use of the Global Navigation Satellite System, the launching of spacecraft by Russian carrier rockets and

fundamental and applied research. The federal space agency had concluded agreements on space cooperation with over 20 countries. At the multilateral level, the Russian Federation was an active participant in the Outer Space Committee, and contributed to the work of the Committee on Space Research, the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordinating Committee, the Forum of space agencies, the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites and the International Astronautical Congress. The work of the Outer Space Committee, as the central international forum for discussing all aspects of the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, should be strengthened.

29. It had recently become apparent that the system of space law was becoming less and less suited to the demands for the development of the outer space sector. If steps were not taken to deal with the problems, the Legal Subcommittee would risk losing its status as the most authoritative forum on issues of international space law. The entire system needed to be comprehensively and progressively adapted to present-day realities, in a single treaty under United Nations auspices. At its next session, the Subcommittee should consider drawing up a list of problems and unresolved issues to serve as a road map for action and provide a better insight into areas in which consensus could be reached.

30. **Mr. Bartolomé** (Argentina) said that outer space must be used rationally and for peaceful purposes, for the benefit of all humanity and future generations; equal access for the entire international community was therefore essential, Space technology applications must benefit everyone, hence the importance of universal access to space data. For developing countries, sustainable development was a prerequisite in order to be able to make use of space applications.

31. The Argentine satellite Aquarius/SAC-D, the fourth satellite in the series, and the largest satellite built in Argentina, had been launched from the Vandengerg air force in the United States of America on 10 June 2011. Its main objective was to measure the salinity of seas and oceans in order to establish long-term climate models, which were vitally important to the study of climate change; it also measured large-scale ground humidity to aid in the development of early warning systems for flooding and epidemics. The satellite carried eight highly complex instruments which enabled it to study the oceans, climate, the atmosphere and the environment, and to monitor space debris. The mission had been developed by the National Commission on Space Activities in cooperation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), entities of the Argentine science and technology sector, and space agencies of Brazil, Canada, France and Italy.

32. International cooperation clearly contributed to the development of space science and technology and their applications; capacity-building in interested States; and the exchange of knowledge and technology among States, on a mutually acceptable basis. Regional and interregional cooperation could strengthen the peaceful uses of outer space and help States develop their space capacities, thereby contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The full application of international law was of fundamental importance in all space activities.

33. **Mr. Bomkoungou** (Burkina Faso) said that while it was obvious that space activities and their applications made important contributions to the welfare of humanity, there were serious concerns in respect of the conservation of the space environment. It was therefore important to strengthen international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space and to ensure scrupulous respect for the relevant international instruments. His delegation welcomed the inclusion of the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the agenda of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, in view of the negative implication for international peace and security.

34. It was important to strengthen regional and interregional cooperation in the use of space technology applications in order to mitigate the consequences of natural disasters. In that regard, a regional workshop on training and awareness-raising on using space data to manage natural disasters had been organized in Ouagadougou in September 2011, in partnership with UN-SPIDER. The workshop had helped raise the awareness of decision makers in regional, subregional and national institutions about the relevance and usefulness of space technologies, and strengthen the capacity of some 20 African experts in respect of natural disaster prevention and management using space tools. Burkina Faso called on the Outer Space Committee to continue to support international cooperation for the transfer of technology in order to build up expertise and make it available so that countries could protect themselves against natural disasters.

35. His delegation affirmed the need to resolve major challenges resulting from space activities in a holistic manner. All humanity could and should benefit from the peaceful uses of outer space through international cooperation, provided that the international community, and in particular Member States, fulfilled their responsibility to ensure sound management of outer space, as the common heritage of humanity.

36. **Mr. Canuto** (Holy See) said that it was important for scientists to research issues that were little understood, such as the issue of space debris. There were three important aspects to consider in respect of space debris: it would increase and was not reversible; debris could be so minute as to be impossible to measure; and the magnitude of the problem was unknown. The unpredictable nature of debris re-entering Earth had already been demonstrated. Some important steps had been taken, including the adoption of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines. It was to be hoped that the international community would address the issue with strong action.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.

United Nations A/C.4/66/SR.9

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
10 January 2012

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 9th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 13 October 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Miculescu ..... (Romania)

Contents

Agenda item 51: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

11-54364 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 51: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/66/20)

1. **Mr. Yadav** (India), reviewing India's main space achievements in 2011, said the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle had placed RESOURCESAT-2 and two auxiliary satellites, YouthSat and X-Sat, into orbit. Two advanced communications satellites, GSAT-8 and the Highly Adaptable Satellite (HYLAS), had also been launched and the GSAT-12 communication satellite had been injected into an elliptical transfer orbit. Moreover, India had developed the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III, a much heavier class of vehicle. In addition, Megha-Tropiques, the Indo-French satellite for monitoring the tropical atmosphere, launched jointly on 12 October 2011, would contribute to the international scientific community's climate research. India planned to launch more remote sensing and communications satellites in the coming months.

2. The Indian space programme continued to integrate the advances in space technology into national development goals. India had concluded international cooperation agreements with more than 35 countries and organizations, and shared its space technology expertise and services with others. For example, the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, based in India, had benefited scholars from 48 countries inside and outside the region.

3. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) said that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) played an important role in maximizing the benefits of space capabilities, in particular for the environment, health and disaster mitigation. It should ensure that the benefits reached also the developing countries; and for their part, the developed countries must give priority to sharing experiences, transferring technology and making data available. All States must have rational and equitable access to the geostationary orbit. The international community needed a common vision for using advanced space research to address climate change, food security and global health.

4. Through its Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) Pakistan had made steady progress in the application of space science and technology in a whole range of fields, including sustainable development. SUPARCO provided useful support to agriculture, the backbone of Pakistan's economy, by monitoring crops and analysing environmental and ground conditions, while contributing to the study of forests, glaciers, climate, water and geology. It had been researching the use of remote sensing and geospatial information systems to support socio-economic projects: for example, the mapping of waterways to prevent water loss through seepage.

5. Space-based emergency communication and disaster management support were crucial, as Pakistan's experience had shown in the 2005 earthquake and the recent recurring flood devastation. SUPARCO was looking for long-term solutions to manage monsoon flooding and water storage for future use. It operated a network of three vertical ionospheric sounders and two geomagnetic observatories, from which the data were being shared with the World Data Centre for cooperative studies of climate and the upper atmosphere. Since 1990, Pakistan had been gathering data for search and rescue operations as a participant in the International COSPAS-SARSAT Programme. Pakistan's communications satellite PAKSAT-1R had expanded Pakistan's telecommunication infrastructure and helped to promote the use of satellite communications, in particular for socio-economic development.

6. Pakistan was a party to the five core United Nations treaties on outer space. Space was the common heritage of humanity and should not be the province of any military doctrine. Negotiations on a comprehensive convention would help to meet the need for confidence-building and greater transparency in space activities. Because preventing an arms race in outer space was relevant to the work of both, the Conference on Disarmament and COPUOS should maintain a working relationship and communicate with each other.

7. **Ms. Fogarty** (Australia) said that, in view of the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), her country welcomed the focus placed by COPUOS on that particular use of space-derived geospatial data. Australia's space policy would help to build the country's capacity to estimate greenhouse gas emissions from land-based activities, which accounted for its and most of the world's emissions. Australia was sharing its experiences and technologies with other countries, to help them develop their own monitoring capabilities. For example, it contributed to the intergovernmental Group on Earth

Observations, which assisted countries with forest observation. In its own region, it was installing a new ground receiving station to improve shared access to satellite data and was committed to funding for the Indonesia-Australia Forest Carbon Partnership. Australia had also hosted the seventeenth session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum, at which it had been agreed to launch a regional readiness review to determine the ability of its member countries and institutions to profit from key climate-related satellite missions. It had also hosted workshops to help East African countries build their own carbon monitoring systems, as part of its support for global sustainable development.

8. The benefits of space-based data went beyond land use analysis, however. Australia supported the Integrated Marine Observing System, which used data from satellites to analyse the role of oceans in climate change in coastal areas, a vital issue for countries in the Pacific. Coordination in the sphere of Earth observation data was important for supporting activities related to sustainability and climate change, in particular. In the belief that access to remote sensing data should be made easier and more affordable, Australia was cooperating with other countries in the region to facilitate access and build capacity.

9. **Mr. Gobalakrishnan** (Malaysia) said that, as part of its commitment to global cooperation in the use of outer space, his Government had recently decided to expand its satellite development programme to build the RazakSAT-2 Earth observation satellite, which would operate in near-equatorial orbit and in cooperation with other equatorial countries. Malaysia had in addition hosted the fourth Joint Project Team meeting of Sentinel Asia in July 2011, organized jointly with the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency. His country intended to become a hub for satellite manufacturing services in South-East Asia and, following the completion of its assembly, integration and testing facility in mid-2012, it would be able to offer a range of services.

10. Nationally, Malaysia had organized various activities in the past year to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight, and had continued to offer special educational programmes intended to inspire young people to explore space science and understand the benefits of space. In 2012, Malaysia expected to complete the framing of its space policy and the drafting of outer space legislation.

11. **Mr. Sorreta** (Philippines) said his country upheld the principle of equal access to outer space and to space-based information for all States, irrespective of their level of development. Developing countries as well must be able to enjoy the enormous benefits of space science by developing the needed skills. The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs had kept the Philippine national space administration abreast of space science developments through international workshops, congresses and other exchanges of scientific information. The administration had made modest improvements to its facilities but needed more financial and human resources to make real strides.

12. Accurate statistics produced by a variety of regional and global institutions must be made readily available to support disaster reduction and emergency response. Assisted by the United Nations Platform of Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), for example, the Philippines had made effective use of satellite imagery to monitor typhoons; and UN-SPIDER continued to help it improve its disaster risk reduction and emergency response practices.

13. **Mr. González** (Cuba) said the legal regime governing outer space could not prevent an arms race in space. Unless the Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral negotiating forum in the field, urgently negotiated an agreement to prevent such an arms race, none of the promising space applications would have a future. COPUOS had special responsibility for promoting the peaceful uses of outer space and should refine the ethical principles and legal instruments guaranteeing a peaceful, fair and non-discriminatory use of space applications.

14. Despite limited resources, Cuba was investing more in space research and applications for peaceful purposes, such as meteorological applications for predicting natural disasters or detecting forest fires. Every State had the right to explore and use outer space for the benefit of all humanity but not all States had the means to achieve autonomous space capabilities in the foreseeable future. Consequently, as more nations engaged in space activities, bilateral and multilateral cooperation and the need to exchange experience and technology acquired more urgency, especially for the developing countries. COPUOS should work more closely with the Committee on Sustainable Development with a view to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable

Development, and turn its attention to climate change and food security, in particular. Cuba believed that through international cooperation all countries could responsibly enjoy the possibilities of space research and applications.

15. **Mr. Govender** (South Africa) said that, in the 50 years since the first human space flight, the United Nations had, through COPUOS, developed the regulatory framework that governed the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. Through other bodies and programmes, it had also led the way in integrating the uses of space into the development agenda. The United Nations must continue to promote the application of geospatial data in many spheres, and had a pivotal role to play in raising awareness and building capacity internationally, regionally and nationally, using Earth observation applications to meet the objectives of sustainable development and facilitating access by all countries to the benefits of those applications. In that connection, South Africa was encouraged by the close relations between COPUOS and many regional and inter-regional mechanisms for space cooperation in furthering global agendas.

16. South Africa had played a role in promoting the peaceful uses of space science and technology. In partnership with other African countries, it had launched the African Resource Management Constellation of satellites, whose data would be used for agriculture, climate monitoring and housing. South Africa was about to start work on a new operational satellite to replace its own locally built and formerly low-orbiting pathfinder model. Seeking to cooperate with more of the spacefaring nations, his Government had signed an agreement with the Russian Federation and was negotiating another with India.

17. The International Astronautical Congress, recently hosted by South Africa, had enabled the international space community to discover South Africa's activities in the space technology field. Cognizant of the link between space and society, his Government had used space technology to reach remote rural areas; since 2000, for example, it had set up 86 telemedicine sites across the country and signed telemedicine agreements with other African States. Its National Aerospace Centre coordinated the teaching of aerospace engineering, offering grants to students in the field. The Government, in order to raise awareness of space technology, had organized nationwide informative events in which several national and international scientific institutions had participated. Lastly, with African Union support, South Africa hoped to host the Square Kilometre Array telescopic project, in partnership with several other African countries, thus boosting Africa's scientific development as it yielded global benefits.

18. **Mr. Oyedele** (Nigeria) said space technology was vital for sustainable development, helping the understanding and prediction of environmental change and the development of agriculture, especially in developing countries. Consequently, Nigeria endorsed the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

19. Space exploration should not set spacefaring nations against the rest but should be a cooperative endeavour benefiting the international community as a whole. Nigeria had therefore supported the African Resource Management Constellation, a regional initiative to develop space technology and use it to further sustainable development. With assistance from the British space industry, his country had launched two high-resolution satellites, NigeriaSat 2 and NigeriaSat X, aimed at using remote sensing to improve natural resource management, disaster management, food security and urban planning.

20. The Committee itself must urgently consider developing legal mechanisms to guarantee the safety of outer space, in view of the amount of space debris, which according to United Nations figures, posed a growing danger to space exploration.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

United Nations A/C.4/66/SR.10

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
8 February 2012

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 18 October 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Miculescu ..... (Romania)

Contents

Agenda item 51: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

11-55250 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 51: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/66/20 and A/C.4/66/L.2/Rev.1)

1. **The Chair**, speaking as the representative of Romania on behalf of the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole, introduced draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.2/Rev.1, which was being submitted for adoption by the Committee in the revised version agreed to by the Working Group. Speaking as Chair, she said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

2. **Ms. Khoudaverdian** (Armenia), referring to paragraph 27 of the draft resolution, pursuant to which Azerbaijan would be admitted as a member of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, noted that the Committee had advised the Government of Azerbaijan to consider the possibility of acceding to the five United Nations treaties on outer space (A/66/20, para. 289). She requested the delegation of Azerbaijan to provide information regarding its accession to those instruments.

3. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.2/Rev.1 was adopted.*

Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (A/66/21 and A/66/261)

4. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report on its thirty-third session (A/66/21). In the Committee's general debate, the central role of the Department of Public Information as the public voice of the United Nations had been recognized. Other issues emphasized had been multilingualism and the need to achieve parity among the six official languages, including on the Organization's website; the importance of the work of the United Nations information centres; the need for more vigorous efforts to bridge the digital divide and the need to continue to utilize traditional media alongside modern technology so as to communicate the Organization's message effectively to all countries; the role of the Department of Public Information in promoting dialogue among civilizations; and the importance of the Department's outreach activities, including its partnerships with civil society, educators, students, celebrities and the private sector. The last chapter of the report included two draft resolutions on questions relating to information.

5. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/66/261), said that the mission of the Department of Public Information was to inform, engage and act. The Department was dedicated to communicating the ideals and purposes of the United Nations to diverse audiences through both traditional media and new media, such as Facebook and Twitter. The United Nations Twitter account, which was managed by the Department, had seen an increase in its number of followers from 100,000 to 500,000 in the past year, and it was now ranked as one of the most influential social media accounts. Social media platforms had contributed to the dissemination of stories during the recent high-level segment of the General Assembly, and the general debate had attracted more than 5 million video views from 210 countries and territories around the world.

6. With regard to multilingualism, the Department continued to encourage content-providing departments and offices to produce materials for the Organization's website in all official languages, and the online version of the General Assembly press kit had been produced in all official languages for the first time. Efforts were also being made to produce and disseminate content on United Nations Radio in all official languages, as well as in Kiswahili and Portuguese. Individual audio files of every speaker in the General Assembly in the relevant original language were being posted online, which would be especially beneficial for users in developing countries who might have lower bandwidth and slower connection speeds. Multilingualism was also being promoted on the in-house television network at United Nations Headquarters. Arrangements had been made to publish *Basic Facts about the United Nations* in French, Spanish and some local languages, and options for translating a number of other United Nations publications into languages other than English were being explored. Six of the top 10 United Nations publications viewed through the Google Books program so far in 2011 had been in French or Spanish. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library website was available in all official languages and the Library offered its information training programmes in English, French and Spanish.

7. Improved editorial coordination had made it easier for United Nations Radio and Television producers and News Centre writers to conduct multilingual interviews with officials and staff at Headquarters and in the field and then share the content generated across languages and platforms. In September 2011, the first ever global conversation with the Secretary-General held on major social networking sites had attracted 13 million views from around the world, the majority from China, and questions had been posed in multiple languages.

8. The global network of United Nations information centres continued to play a key role not only in fostering a better understanding of the Organization's role and relevance around the world but also in supporting the Organization's special envoys and other advisers involved in political discussions. Recently, for example, the centres had provided such assistance in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen. The recent tragic events in Abuja, Nigeria, showed that the security of field staff was a matter that must be given priority. Despite financial constraints, the Department was making every effort to ensure that all its offices met the minimum United Nations security standards. He therefore hoped for the support of the Fifth Committee when the Department's budget submissions were reviewed later in the year. He thanked those Member States which provided rent-free premises or voluntary contributions towards the work of the information centres and appealed to others to do likewise.

9. The Department of Public Information was leading a United Nations system-wide campaign to raise global public awareness ahead of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to be held in 2012. The Conference would provide a significant opportunity to set out a vision of the future in which the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development were integrated. The Department of Public Information/ Non-Governmental Organizations Conference on the theme of sustainable societies and responsive citizens, held in Bonn, Germany, in September 2011, had attracted 1,300 participants representing 300 NGOs from 65 countries, including, for the first time, Iraq, Lebanon and Morocco. The final declaration and plan of action of the Conference included recommendations that would contribute to the negotiations at the Rio+20 Conference. Environmental sustainability had been one of the key topics discussed at a forum held in Asturias, Spain, in July 2011 as part of the Department's Creative Community Outreach Initiative. Sustainable development had also been the theme of the third annual Global Model United Nations Conference, held in August 2011 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, which had been attended by almost 500 university students from 61 countries.

10. Under the UN4U outreach programme, the Secretary-General and other United Nations officials would be visiting 60 schools across New York City over the current fortnight to provide information about the United Nations and share their experience of working for the Organization. A number of United Nations information centres were also organizing UN4U outreach activities in cooperation with other United Nations and local partners. In the third annual Citizen Ambassadors video contest, participants had had 30 seconds to pitch an idea that could change the world to the Secretary-General. The winners would be invited to New York to visit the United Nations and meet the Secretary-General.

11. The Department of Public Information was continuing its close cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs. The new peacekeeping website, a joint effort by the Departments of Public Information, Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, was now available in all six official languages. UNifeed had produced and distributed some 80 documentary programmes on United Nations peacekeeping and political missions, including coverage of events leading up to independence in South Sudan. The United Nations Photo website continued to expand its gallery of images of all aspects of the Organization's work, and the Department had organized two exhibitions relating to peacekeeping operations. A special issue of *UN Chronicle* entitled "Pursuing Peace: Commemorating Dag Hammarskjöld" had been published.

12. The Organization's response to the crisis in the Horn of Africa had been detailed in weekly documents produced by the Department for the United Nations system and had also been covered extensively on the United Nations News Centre portal and United Nations Radio. UNifeed had produced or distributed more than 60 stories on the crisis and United Nations Photo had created a special front-page gallery of images from

field photographers. The issue had also been repeatedly featured on the United Nations home page.

13. A similar approach had been used to highlight the United Nations response to the events of the Arab Spring. A special effort had been made at the annual training course on strategic communications and United Nations peacekeeping operations to facilitate greater participation by missions led by the Department of Political Affairs. The Department of Public Information had also provided support and advice in the planning process for the projected political mission in Libya.

14. The International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, held in Hungary in July 2011, had examined the role of the media and culture in creating conditions for peace in the region. The Department, in close consultation with the Department of Political Affairs and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, had revised and updated the permanent exhibition on the question of Palestine and the United Nations, which would be formally launched on 29 November 2011, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Arrangements would be made by the United Nations information centres to translate the exhibition text into a number of languages. Among the first to see the exhibition would be 10 young Palestinian journalists selected by the Department for its annual training programme. In addition, 14 media professionals from developing countries and countries with economies in transition had come to United Nations Headquarters under the 2011 Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme to learn about the Organization's work.

15. More than 700 higher education institutions in 108 countries had joined the United Nations Academic Impact initiative since its launch in November 2010. As part of the initiative, a forum entitled "New Partners for Change: the United Nations and the World Academic Community" had taken place in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in August 2011, and a symposium in observance of the annual International Day of Peace had been held at United Nations Headquarters, in partnership with Kyung Hee University in the Republic of Korea. More than 3,500 students from 19 universities in that country had joined the latter event by video link. Three e-discussions had also been held on the Academic Impact Facebook page, and an exhibition organized with the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, an Academic Impact member, had recently opened in the visitors' lobby at Headquarters.

16. The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme had expanded its outreach to educators across the world. In July and August 2011, workshops had been held in Kigali, New York and Washington, D.C., to underscore the lessons of the Holocaust for genocide prevention. The 2011 Holocaust Remembrance had focused on the theme of women and the Holocaust and the theme for 2012 would be children and the Holocaust. A round-table discussion on justice and accountability after the Holocaust was also being organized in partnership with the International Bar Association.

17. In his recent address to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General had spoken of the need to build a United Nations that was faster and more flexible, that innovated and drew on the power of social media and new technologies, and that helped solved real-world problems in real time. Those were the very objectives that guided the work of the Department of Public Information. Opportunities and challenges were expanding, but resources often did not keep pace. Nonetheless, the Department's dedicated workforce made it possible to achieve success.

18. **Mr. Ahmad** (Department of Public Information), presenting the Department's new website, said that the site had just been launched in all six official languages. It used the new branding of the United Nations home page and had been made fully accessible to persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and the Web Accessibility Guidelines for United Nations Websites.

19. Almost every part of the United Nations website contained material from the Department of Public Information. However, the Department's own website was intended to be a one-stop shop for information on all its activities, presented through an issue-based approach rather than focusing on the way the Department was organized. Nonetheless, for those who wanted it, the "About DPI" link contained further information on the Department's mission and structure, including an organizational chart with pop-up boxes that provided a short explanation of each Division's activities and a link to its individual web page.

20. The website highlighted the Department's campaigns on key issues and also provided information

about the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, the Office of the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General and the United Nations information centres. The "News" tab provided access to the video that was posted on the United Nations home page each day. The website also provided information on the Organization's contacts with partners such as NGOs and academic institutions, and on its activities aimed at engaging the public. Information for visitors and the media was available, and links were provided to other sources of information, such as the United Nations News Centre, library services and United Nations Television and Radio. Lastly, there were links on the website to the United Nations accounts on Twitter and Facebook and the United Nations channel on YouTube.

21. **Mr. Chabi** (Morocco), noting that the mission of the Department of Information was to inform, engage and act, said that an appropriate fourth element of that mission would be to bring the United Nations closer to the daily lives of people across the world. He requested an assessment of the Academic Impact initiative to date and asked what measures could be taken to extend the initiative to all countries. He also wished to know what procedure should be followed by those national radio and television channels wishing to establish a partnership with United Nations Radio and Television and to use the content produced by them.

22. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that the Academic Impact initiative had already achieved positive results in the year since its launch. Many higher education institutions offered courses in subjects that were relevant to the Organization's objectives, such as sustainable development, poverty reduction, public health and human rights. Academic Impact had facilitated networking among such institutions and had also enabled the Organization to increase its involvement with them.

23. National radio and television stations could use any programmes produced by the United Nations by downloading them from the Internet. However, in many cases the Organization had concluded memorandums of understanding with national stations that wished to have a more formalized partnership with the United Nations.

24. **Mr. Dujarric** (Department of Public Information) said that United Nations Radio programmes were available in all six official languages as well as Portuguese and Kiswahili, and United Nations Television programmes were also available in several languages. Production of the first programme in French in the United Nations Television documentary series "21st Century" was under way and there were plans to produce programmes in other languages. He encouraged any delegation wishing to establish a partnership between its country's national radio and television stations and the United Nations to contact the Department directly.

25. **Mr. Uspenskiy** (Russian Federation) said that, while his delegation welcomed the use of new media such as Twitter and Facebook to bring the Organization's activities to a wider audience, it was still important to support and develop traditional media, such as United Nations Radio and Television, the website and the News Centre, whose effectiveness was already proven and which were widely used in many regions of the world. In the context of budget constraints, he was concerned that resources would be diverted from such traditional media, particularly given the need to respect the principle of multilingualism.

26. **Mr. Wada** (Japan) said that, after the devastating earthquake and tsunami in his country in March 2011, the Japanese people had found great comfort in the messages of solidarity sent to them by the United Nations Messengers of Peace. He also welcomed the Messengers' participation in events organized to commemorate the International Day of Peace. He requested information about other activities carried out by the Messengers.

27. **Mr. Nwosa** (Nigeria), referring to the recent events in Abuja, said that acts of terrorism would not be tolerated in Nigeria and that his Government had taken bold steps to ensure that no such incidents occurred again. He reaffirmed his Government's support for the work of the United Nations in Nigeria and its determination to ensure that the perpetrators of terrorist acts did not escape with impunity.

28. In the past, his delegation had called on the Department of Public Information to take steps to prepare the ground for peacekeeping missions by providing host communities with information about the activities of peacekeepers before their arrival. He wished to know whether any such steps had been taken over the past year.

29. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), replying to

the comments made by the representative of the Russian Federation, said that the Department was making every effort to maintain the resources allocated to traditional media while also trying to find resources in each Division for developing the use of social media. A combination of traditional and new media had been found to be the most effective means of communicating the Organization's activities to the public. With regard to the comments made by the representative of Japan, he said that the Messengers of Peace were involved in a number of activities, such as making visits to peacekeeping missions, mostly at their own initiative. No budget resources were available for the programme.

30. In reply to the question raised by the representative of Nigeria, he said that the Department worked closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on communications-related matters with a view to ensuring that peacekeeping activities were understood and supported by the host communities in the relevant countries. Peacekeeping operations usually had their own budgets for public information activities which were larger than the budget available to the Department of Public Information for that purpose. For example, Radio Okapi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was supported with funds from the peacekeeping operation in that country.

31. **Mr. Dujarric** (Department of Public Information) said that the Department's key objective was to deliver the message of the United Nations in the best possible way to its global audience, bearing in mind that different markets required different media. Radio and television were still crucial in many parts of the world, but more and more people wanted to obtain their news and information from new platforms. Moreover, the line between traditional and new media was becoming increasingly blurred; many people now accessed radio and television programmes through social media or mobile devices. The United Nations information centres were also increasingly aware of the need to communicate with the public in each country in the appropriate language and using the most appropriate technology. The growing variety of ways of receiving and disseminating information presented a challenge, but it was vital to keep pace with all the latest technological developments.

32. **Mr. Nasser** (Department of Public Information) said that the Messengers of Peace participated in a number of activities in addition to the ones referred to by the representative of Japan. In February 2011, the late Wangari Maathai had participated via videoconference in a forum on the subject of environmental sustainability held in Los Angeles under the Creative Community Outreach Initiative. Charlize Theron had participated in a panel discussion on women. In May 2011, Daniel Barenboim had taken a group of 35 musicians from Europe to perform in Gaza, and in August he had taken the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, made up of Arab and Israeli musicians, to play in the Republic of Korea. Some of the Messengers also worked with other funds and programmes of the United Nations; for example, Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein of Jordan was involved in the activities of the World Food Programme. It might be useful to update the Messengers of Peace website more frequently with information on their activities.

33. **Mr. Limeres** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, stressed the importance of the close cooperation between the Department and the Committee on Information. The Group of 77 and China fully supported the work of the Department in its continued campaigns on issues of importance to the international community, in particular the extensive outreach activities carried out in connection with the fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul in May 2011, and the 2011 High-level Meetings on AIDS and on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases. Since many countries in the developing world still lacked the resources and technical means to access information regarding the United Nations, the Department had the challenging task of reaching out to the widest possible audiences in various local languages.

34. The Group of 77 and China emphasized the importance of the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine in support of the efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The annual training programme for media professionals from the Occupied Palestinian Territory was one of the many useful elements of the programme which should be further enhanced and reinforced.

35. The Group of 77 and China urged that all possible measures should be taken to strengthen the United Nations information centres. The centres were vital in bridging the gap between developed and

developing countries in terms of access to information and communications technology.

36. The Group of 77 and China stressed the need for the United Nations websites to be available in all official languages and welcomed the efforts made to date in that regard. However, more resources were needed, and a new strategy should be designed and implemented in order to achieve full linguistic parity, including the delivery of daily press releases in all official languages. At the same time, it was important that traditional media, including both radio and print, should continue to be used in disseminating information about the United Nations, as such media had been and still were the primary means of communication in many developing countries.

37. **Mr. Gálvez** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, reiterated the importance, in the context of information, of the Charter of the United Nations, the Constitution and regulations of the International Telecommunication Union, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Group acknowledged the efforts of the Department of Public Information to bring about a better understanding of the work of the United Nations on a wide range of issues of importance to the international community, in particular thematic debates held by the General Assembly. It urged the Department to maintain objectivity, impartiality, accuracy and consistency in the dissemination of its messages.

38. The Department should continue to update its communications network for disasters in order to bolster the coherence and effectiveness of coordination and response protocols, thereby encouraging multilateral action rather than unilateral measures.

39. The Rio Group supported the use of electronic communications for many types of modern information exchange. However, in the light of the growing digital divide between developed and developing countries, traditional media must continue to be used to disseminate the message of the United Nations.

40. The Rio Group welcomed the Department's close cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, in addition to the dissemination of information relating to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The work of the United Nations information centres was essential in spreading the message of the United Nations; the Department should continue to support the centres through the effective use of the resources at its disposal. The Rio Group welcomed the decision to establish a United Nations Information Centre in Luanda, Angola, which would make an invaluable contribution to meeting the needs of Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa.

41. The Rio Group reaffirmed its full respect for freedom of expression and of the press, which were fundamental to a democratic society. Those freedoms must be exercised responsibly, in conformity with domestic legislation and with United Nations instruments. The Rio Group was concerned by violations of radio-electronic space and reiterated the need for radio frequencies to be used in the public interest and in accordance with the principles of international law.

42. Multilingualism was inherent to the United Nations; in traditional media, particularly radio programming, information should be disseminated in as many languages as possible, including Portuguese and indigenous languages. The Rio Group was concerned about the growing lack of website content in Spanish and other languages when compared to English. It welcomed the establishment and updating of certain thematic sections of the website in the six official languages and the creation of commemorative websites. However, much remained to be done in order to achieve linguistic parity. As a first step, press releases should be issued in all official languages. Since financial resources were limited, the six languages could be used in rotation on the basis of statistics which the Department already had at its disposal.

43. The Rio Group welcomed the Department's efforts to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities to the United Nations website in the six official languages. It urged the Department to maintain its level of services during the implementation of the capital master plan.

44. **Mr.** Rodney **Charles** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM particularly welcomed the activities of the Department of Public Information aimed at promoting awareness of sustainable development and related issues in the run-up to the Rio+20 Conference. The United Nations Information Centre for the Caribbean

Area had been participating in efforts to reduce the use of paper, including during the activities it had organized to promote the International Year of Forests in partnership with NGOs.

45. The Centre had mounted an exhibition to mark International Women's Day in 2011 and had continued to assist in regional efforts to promote the UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign. It had also assisted in events held in 2011 to mark the International Year for People of African Descent, Nelson Mandela International Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. It had sought to strengthen its media relations and extend its outreach throughout the Caribbean region and was making efforts to strengthen its information technology capacity. As in previous years, young journalists from the Bahamas and Barbados had been selected to participate in the 2011 Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme.

46. The CARICOM member States looked forward to continued cooperation with a view to ensuring that the annual observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade reflected the importance of the event and with a view to promoting efforts to have a monument erected in their honour. Continued support would be needed from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in respect of the international design competition, and from the Department, to generate support through media campaigns and other information dissemination mechanisms.

47. Non-communicable diseases affected significant portions of the population in both developed and developing countries and presented major challenges to social and economic development. CARICOM therefore welcomed the Department's work to promote awareness of such diseases, including by publicizing the High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases held in 2011. CARICOM also commended the Department's efforts to utilize social media in order to improve the speed of access to information and to expand the network of people to whom it was available.

48. The allocation of both staff and financial resources to United Nations information centres, particularly those in developing countries, needed to be reviewed on a continuous basis. The United Nations Information Centre for the Caribbean Area should be strengthened so that it could carry out its activities more effectively.

49. **Mr. Selim** (Egypt) said that his delegation supported the work of the Department Public Information to strengthen the impact of the United Nations information system and highlight its pioneering international role. The Department's efforts to enable the United Nations and the entertainment industry to join forces in order to heighten awareness and enlist public opinion around issues of concern to the international community were admirable, and should be extended to the Arab region and Africa. While it was commendable that the United Nations information centres were using contemporary social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to disseminate information about the Organization and its work, the more traditional medium of radio broadcasting should not be neglected, as it was more generally accessible in developing countries, including in remote rural areas. There should be more Arabic-language broadcasting aimed at Africa and the Middle East. In that connection, the global reach of the United Nations would be enhanced if there were parity among the Organization's six official languages, as that would strengthen the vital role of the Department and would also greatly enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations website. There was a need for greater integration between Headquarters and the United Nations information centres around the world. The cooperation between the information centres in Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria was important in that regard.

50. The Department should continue to focus on programmes and activities relating to the socio-economic development of Member States, especially in Africa. Its special information programme on the question of Palestine was of crucial importance in view of the continued suffering of the Palestinian people under occupation and violations of their rights by the Israeli occupying power. The current Palestinian initiative aimed at securing membership of the United Nations was also of great interest. The Department could assist by providing accurate, comprehensive coverage of the issue.

51. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation commended the efforts made by the Department of Information to

spread the message of the United Nations and to raise awareness of issues of importance to the international community. However, if those efforts were to be as effective as possible, they must be carried out in all six official languages of the Organization.

52. His Government was concerned about the technological divide between developed and developing nations. He recalled that the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had recently advocated the building of an information society focused on development and on promoting the use of information and communications technologies for the benefit of all, especially developing countries.

53. Many so-called independent media demanded freedom of expression, yet failed to assume their social responsibilities. His Government was concerned about campaigns by powerful international media organizations that sought to distort the reality of life in developing countries, thus encouraging a lack of respect for the sovereignty of nations. The media were a positive resource if they served social justice, truth, respect for cultural diversity and brotherhood among peoples; but they were a dangerous weapon if they were used to entrench underdevelopment, ignorance, injustice and neo-colonial domination. In his country, freedom of expression was unrestricted. The right to information was recognized, and public debate took place freely.

54. His Government supported all the efforts being made by developing countries to establish their own sovereign information and communications networks. Venezuela itself was making strides in that direction. Its Simón Bolívar satellite, which had been orbiting the Earth since October 2008, facilitated Internet data services, telephony, television, tele-health and tele-education, and ensured that telecommunications services were available even in remote parts of the country not served by commercial companies. The satellite had also been made available for use by other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

55. A project had been launched in 2009 to bring digital telecommunications to Venezuelan schools, and a programme had been in place since 2007 to build local capacity and social networks by promoting the use of information and communications technology. The Bolivarian revolution had led to the creation of alternative and community media that were helping to raise the intellectual, cultural and educational standards of the people. His country stood ready to share its experience in the context of South-South cooperation.

56. **Mr. Saripudin** (Indonesia) said that the rapid development of information technology had helped to create a borderless world and had changed the way people interacted. Social media had become powerful tools in that regard; for example, in the Arab Spring they had been instrumental in spreading messages of democracy and in rejecting authoritarianism and dictatorship. However, the Internet could also be used to spread hatred and prejudice. His delegation was therefore pleased to note that the Department of Public Information was using new media to disseminate information about the work of the United Nations. The Department had a vital role to play in sensitizing the media throughout the world about the need to promote a culture of peace and tolerance, combat prejudice and division and eradicate the practice of stereotyping in the media.

57. His delegation commended the Department's media programme on the Palestinian issue, including the website on the question of Palestine and the annual training programme for Palestinian media professionals. It was essential to continue to raise international awareness of the issue with a view to supporting efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The Department should also continue its programme of annual international media seminars on the question of Palestine.

58. As a troop-contributing country, Indonesia recognized the vital importance of disseminating information about United Nations peacekeeping activities and helping Member States and the public to understand the constraints and challenges faced by peacekeepers. His Government was pleased at the continued cooperation between the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs in that regard, which would enhance the image of the Organization in the eyes of the world, as well as the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions.

59. The principle of multilingualism was crucial to ensuring the widest possible access to information on the Organization's work. His delegation commended the United Nations information centres, in particular the Information Centre in Jakarta, for their dedication

to disseminating information to local communities. In that context, efforts to publish information materials not only in the six official languages but also in non-official languages were particularly welcome.

60. **Mr. Diallo** (Senegal) said that his delegation encouraged the Department of Information to continue to harness the potential of the Internet and new media, in particular social networks. At the same time, in view of the North-South digital divide, efforts should be made to raise awareness of the Digital Solidarity Fund. The Department should also continue its use of traditional media, such as radio, television and the press, which in many developing countries were the main tools for the transmission of information. His delegation was pleased that the Department continued to emphasize the needs of Africa, in particular by promoting the objectives of the Planning and Coordination Agency of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

61. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Department of Public Information was continuing its special information programme on the question of Palestine and encouraged the Department to intensify its efforts in order to promote the exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to live in a free, independent and viable State. He also commended the role of the United Nations information centres in informing different population groups, in their own languages, about the Organization's activities throughout the world, and called for the capacity of the centres to be strengthened. Senegal, which had made premises available free of charge to the United Nations Information Centre in Dakar, invited other host countries to support their respective centres so as to make up for the shortage of resources available from the Department of Public Information.

62. Despite the numerous resolutions on the subject, the principle of multilingualism at the United Nations was not always fully respected. The Department of Public Information should therefore make every effort to ensure parity among the official languages of the Organization. In that regard, it was encouraging that the Department had established cooperation mechanisms with a number of universities for the translation of documents into the six official languages for the United Nations website. Similarly, it was important to improve the quality of information services such as radio, television, press releases and the website.

63. Information was an important tool for shaping public opinion and for increasing mutual understanding among countries and peoples. His delegation paid tribute to the information and communications professionals who worked day in and day out, often at the price of their lives, to publicize the activities of the United Nations.

64. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that information was a central feature of the contemporary world: it no longer merely reported on events, but had become a creator and driver of events and a contributing factor in the shaping of the future. Consequently, the world's peoples needed balanced, impartial information, not misleading and biased information advocating intervention in the internal affairs of States on various pretexts.

65. His delegation commended the role played by the Department of Public Information in coordinating preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and mustering support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development. However, more effort should be devoted to narrowing the digital divide separating North and South. Moreover, parity among the official languages of the United Nations was essential for the purpose of disseminating United Nations material, including press releases. The question of Palestine and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State also warranted greater attention, as did the peaceful settlement that had been achieved in the Sudan.

66. The final stage of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement had been the self-determination referendum in the southern Sudan. That referendum had been conducted fairly and freely and, following its outcome, the Government of the Republic of the Sudan had recognized the State of South Sudan. Moreover, the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur had recently been finalized. Those accomplishments reflected the Sudan's commitment to peace and the settlement of disputes through dialogue and negotiation.

67. **Ms. Abu** (Israel) said that her delegation wished to commend the work of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme in promoting Holocaust remembrance around the world and particularly welcomed the recently released study guide and DVD on women in the Holocaust. Her delegation was gratified that the Outreach Programme was raising awareness among students and young people through

videoconferences and other activities, including a Twitter campaign based on the memory of Anne Frank. The growing number of Member States and civil society organizations involved in the Programme testified to the success of its efforts.

68. New media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, were empowering individuals to communicate more freely and openly than ever before. Her delegation was pleased that the Department of Public Information was embracing such tools in order to reach global audiences.

69. In April 2011, her delegation, in partnership with the Department, had hosted a special evening in observance of World Autism Awareness Day; it was the third year in a row that it had hosted such an event. The evening had included a panel discussion and a screening of an Israeli television series depicting the life of a family with an autistic child.

70. Her delegation remained concerned about the special information programme on the question of Palestine, which had been established pursuant to an anti-Israeli resolution that ignored the complicated nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and promoted the dissemination of biased and misleading information that served only to deepen animosity between the parties. Her Government would not participate in the programme until a more even-handed approach was adopted. It would, however, be willing to engage in the formulation of a more constructive and balanced resolution, focused on peace education, tolerance, mutual understanding and the prevention of incitement, as the basis for future activities.

71. **Ms. Seward** (Department of Public Information), noting the recent departure of the Director of the United Nations Information Centre for the Caribbean Area, said that the process to select a successor was well under way and was expected to be completed soon.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/66/SR.11

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
6 January 2012

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 19 October 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Ciss (Vice-Chair) ..... (Senegal)
later: Ms. Miculescu (Chair) ..... (Romania)

Contents

Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

11-55517 (E)

Please recycle

In the absence of Ms. Miculescu (Romania), Mr. Ciss (Senegal), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/66/21 and A/66/261)

1. **Ms. Pamaranon** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that, as the Department of Public Information continued to provide balanced and relevant information about the United Nations, it was vital for it to make that information, and all important documents, available on its website in the six official languages of the Organization. There had, in fact, been welcome cooperation between the Department and universities to translate the website into Russian, Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic, as a way of increasing visits to the site, especially from developing countries; yet even so, the Arabic website remained the least visited, despite the popularity of the Internet in Arabic-speaking countries. The United Nations information centres and offices throughout the world had themselves made commendable efforts to develop web pages in local languages. Another way to promote multilingualism was the observance of International Mother Language Day, in which the Department participated annually.

2. While the use also of social media to distribute information was a timely new approach to bridging the digital divide that threatened universal access to information, the Department should continue to provide information, again in all six languages, through traditional media for those who lacked advanced means of communication. It was also important for the Department to continue its significant efforts to reach the young people of the world and broaden their awareness of international affairs. The members of ASEAN also encouraged the Department to work closely with Member States and civil society in order to further all the Millennium Development Goals.

3. In an effort to use the free flow of information to achieve common progress in the region, ASEAN itself had adopted a plan of action that included promoting language learning through exchanges among its members as a way of fostering understanding of their diverse cultures.

4. **Ms. Bulhoon** (United Arab Emirates), referring to the contemporary information technology revolution, said that some developing States were lagging behind, and consequently it was the responsibility of the developed States to provide them with the assistance they needed to overcome the lag. In the Arab region, information was of particular importance in conveying the real nature of the movement of change sweeping Arab societies.

5. The United Arab Emirates, for its part, had embarked upon a policy designed to enlist state-of-the-art information and communication technology to address issues affecting the State. The national media had been experiencing a gre t flowering, and Dubai was a free zone for the exercise of all kinds of information-related activities.

6. Every year her country hosted the Arab Media Forum, which sought to open channels for in-depth dialogue and exchanges among Arab and Western media representatives, and presented annual awards honouring distinguished Arab journalists in all fields as well as awards to the families of journalists who had died in the performance of their professional duty.

7. International legal instruments should be enacted to facilitate greater international cooperation in the field of information. Moreover, international media conglomerates should abide by ethical standards and also maintain their credibility by, inter alia, broadcasting the facts about the suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of the policies of aggression, blockade, killing and settlement expansion being pursued by Israel in flagrant violation of human rights principles and the provisions of international law.

8. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that in view of the significance of information in building societies and enhancing their people's awareness, the Syrian Arabic Republic had recently adopted a new Information Act aimed at enabling those working to provide information to conduct their important mission more effectively.

9. The Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information were responsible for making the voice of the United Nations heard throughout the world. Accordingly, it was essential for them to use reliable sources of information that were not confined to the Western media and that did not politicize their material or seek to lead their audiences into error by distorting facts. The Organization's credibility and impartiality were at stake. The Arab

region was frequently the subject of such distortion, unfortunately.

10. The efforts of the Department to strengthen the United Nations Internet site were welcome. However, the Arabic-language site was still not sufficiently developed. Corrective measures should be taken in the interests of parity among all the Organization's official languages.

11. The Department was to be commended for following the question of Palestine, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions, and urged it to give still more attention to that issue, in view of the suffering of the Palestinian people over so many decades. Israel, with the support of some major Powers, continued to occupy the Palestinian territories and deny their people their legitimate rights, systematically violating human rights and international humanitarian law by confiscating land, demolishing homes, building new settlements, building the apartheid wall, desecrating and violating Islamic and Christian sites, terrorizing people, and blockading Gaza. Accordingly, it was important for the yearly special information programme on the question of Palestine to be continued.

12. The Department might also play a greater role in encouraging dialogue between cultures and building bridges of mutual understanding between peoples and mutual respect for their different values and religious beliefs. In that connection, freedom of expression was a universal right, but one that should not be used to attack the beliefs or cultural heritage of others.

13. **Ms. Zamora** (Costa Rica) said her country found that full, free, transparent and multidirectional information was indispensable for a healthy democracy, regardless of how it was disseminated. Education and both traditional and new media were essential to contemporary communication. The United Nations was using the new media effectively and had made efforts to reduce the digital divide. Yet the divide could be smaller if all Governments devoted resources wisely to developing proper networks, infrastructure and entrepreneurship. Some countries had found ways to provide access to advanced wireless media with limited financial resources, while others had devoted resources to censoring their media. The United Nations was well placed to encourage key national and regional partnerships that would expand communications networks.

14. Increased cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information strengthened the effectiveness of both. While it was heartening that multilingualism was being discussed, four of the six official languages were still not equally available online. Therefore, it remained vital to explore initiatives to ensure language parity. The Rio Group proposal to disseminate press releases in all official languages on a specified rotation was a good option.

15. The work of the Department on issues related to development, peacekeeping operations and the peace process in the Middle East was commendable. It had also done much to increase awareness of the effects of climate change and to develop a communications strategy for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Consequently, the limited financial resources for the Department's activities were a matter of concern; and Member States, in particular developed countries, were urged to meet their financial obligations to the Organization. Spending and allocation priorities should be refined to maximize efficiency and creativity, perhaps by reducing costs through partnerships with academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the media.

16. **Mr. Panahov** (Azerbaijan) said that his Government supported innovative partnerships with civil society, academic institutions, and the creative arts community. It welcomed the Department's outreach programmes highlighting international events, such as the international days commemorating Nowruz and the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It was clear that managing the flow of information became increasingly important if information of global significance was to reach a broad audience. Vast segments of the population in developing countries did not benefit from new technology, and more should be done to fill that gap. Therefore, the Department should improve its activities in areas of special interest to developing countries and others with special needs.

17. Official statements of the United Nations, including press releases, must follow the standards laid down in the Charter of the United Nations. Any departure from or loose interpretation of the position or the accepted language of the Organization, especially in respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of recognized borders, was unacceptable. Azerbaijan supported the work of the Department in

providing information on issues of importance such as peace and security, development, human rights and the needs of the least developed countries.

18. **Ms. Ow** (Singapore) said that while new media formats had revolutionized how information was disseminated, and had in general improved ease of access to information, the digital divide persisted and was hampering economic growth and social development. In response, her Government had developed a master plan to create a nation conversant with the new technologies by bridging the digital divide in particular for the disabled, the elderly and low-income students, through targeted training in the new media. Other centres throughout the island catered to those in the general population who did not have computers or required help with the Internet. Since the Organization played a crucial role in narrowing the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor, it should consider how to improve digital inclusion for all, regardless of their demographic profile.

19. **Mr. Al-Saiyani** (Yemen) said that his delegation supported the efforts of the Department of Public Information to raise public awareness of the work of the United Nations and to illuminate its mission in key priority areas. In particular, the Department was to be commended for undertaking annually the special information programme on the question of Palestine, the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, held in Budapest in 2011, and the training programme for Palestinian media practitioners.

20. The Internet was an information and communication medium of unparalleled importance, and consequently the United Nations website was an ideal means of promoting awareness of the Organization's work and aims. Unfortunately, there was a widening gap between the content produced in English and that produced in the other official languages, and that situation might be impairing the site's effectiveness. United Nations information activities in general should promote a better linguistic balance, and should also do more to encourage dialogue and understanding between cultures.

21. The United Nations Information Centre in Sana'a was of particular importance because of its location in a densely populated Arab country that was also one of the least developed. In addition to propagating the principles of the United Nations and helping to make the Organization better known, the Centre had supported the United Nations communications team in Yemen by helping it to produce radio programmes on the subjects of education, employment and early marriage.

22. **Mr. Bonkoungou** (Burkina Faso) said that the Organization must adapt to constantly changing communications technology as it conveyed its ideals while also weighing the needs of each region. In matters of public information, the Committee on Information had the central policy role, and it should continue to support the programmes and strategies implemented by the Department of Public Information to explain the work of the United Nations and give it greater visibility. The Department itself had done laudable work in promoting the action of the United Nations on issues including peace and security, the Millennium Development Goals, climate change, human rights and maternal and child health.

23. The Department continued to take advantage of progress in information technology, in particular the social media, to reach an ever-broader audience. Efforts should be made to promote better access to new technologies for the countries of the South, especially in Africa. Nevertheless, traditional media should continue to be used, as should efforts to enhance language parity in the work produced by the Department.

24. The United Nations information centres were vital in bringing the message of the United Nations to local populations in developing countries, and they were to be commended for regularly striving to improve their information programmes, in partnership with the governments, civil society institutions and media of the countries concerned. Burkina Faso itself hosted and fully supported an information centre for the Sahel region, which was a reliable source of up-to-date information about the United Nations for a vast and diversified audience and often worked in conjunction with regional media representatives and networks. The centres were important to the visibility of the Organization, and it was crucial to ensure that they were adequately funded. The rationalization of centres should be discussed on a case-by-case basis with the host government and other interested countries in a particular region.

25. **Ms. Dunlop** (Brazil), observing that the United Nations message needed to be delivered in as many languages as possible, praised the work of the

Portuguese Unit of United Nations Radio, which, despite its limited resources, had played an important role in broadcasting information worldwide. Her Government continued to support the United Nations Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro, usefully active in Brazil for more than six decades, and also favoured the early establishment of a centre in Luanda, Angola, to address the needs of all Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. The centres were essential to the information activities of the Organization, especially in developing countries, and she encouraged the Department of Public Information and Member States to explore creative ways to support them, for example, in the case of host countries, by offering premises free of charge. Brazil was pleased to be hosting the upcoming global meeting of directors of information centres, which would be discussing information issues related to the Rio+20 Conference.

26. It was very important to promote both traditional and new media because both were critical in reaching the broadest audience possible. The synergy between the two had been very effective in the aftermath of the recent natural disasters in Haiti and in Japan. A combination of media could also increase awareness of pressing issues such as sustainable development, food security, the Millennium Development Goals, or major environmental problems, particularly leading up to the Rio+20 Conference. Moreover, as the experience of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) had proven, constant communication with local populations was indispensable to the success of peacekeeping missions, and the Department of Public Information should explore ways of strengthening such communication.

27. Her delegation appreciated the Department's programme to raise awareness about the question of Palestine and promote dialogue among journalists, civil society, the academic community and policymakers in order to foster peace in the Middle East, and other valuable initiatives such as the outreach programme on the Holocaust aimed at combating intolerance and contributing to a culture of peace. The Department was also to be commended for increasing online access to historical United Nations information and documentation. Preserving institutional memory would be instrumental in the future work of the Organization.

28. *Ms. Miculescu (Romania) took the Chair.*

29. **Mr. Nakamae** (Japan) said that his Government welcomed the efforts of the Department of Public Information to engage the new media because they had a direct impact on the emotional aspect of public opinion, as just seen during the Arab Spring or the tsunami in Japan. However, it cautioned that senior United Nations officials had to be actively involved in content management, since information delivered through social networking sites was unfiltered; and they had to be prepared to handle the response, which was immediate. While the new media seemed to be user-friendly, they were time-consuming and could absorb resources quickly. A greater reliance on new media had to be balanced against the use of traditional media so that funding could be appropriately allocated. In that connection, he called on the Department to continue to work strategically and enhance efficiency and transparency.

30. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that the digital revolution had profoundly changed how people thought, acted and learned, and how countries managed their economic and public affairs. The United Nations had to adopt a global strategy in delivering information, to ensure that all States had a fair share of the benefits of the new technologies and equal access to information that was crucial to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, improving the lives of billions, and resolving conflicts. Still, some aspects of the rapid changes in communication were of legitimate concern. It was important for the Organization to use the new media judiciously so as not to accentuate the digital divide.

31. His delegation welcomed the emphasis placed by the Department of Public Information on new means of enhancing global awareness, and on internal communication that gave Member States a better understanding of United Nations activities, thereby attracting support for them. The Department's contribution to a documentary film on the stories of Algerians who had renounced terrorism illustrated the major role it could play in making the public comprehend the roots and terrible consequences of terrorism and the need to combat it. All the main activities of the Organization should continue to be covered with equal energy.

32. The Department should work towards full parity for all six official languages in what was produced on the Internet and in its broadcasts and publications. Moreover, it was crucial to publicize the reforms and

advances made in the developing countries, which were often lost in the constant stream of information from the North. A matter of concern, however, were the persistent cuts to Department resources, which significantly reduced the capacity of the United Nations information centres, particularly in the developing countries.

33. His Government was committed to working with the United Nations and other international bodies towards the establishment of a global system for the comprehensive, orderly and proficient use of information technologies in the service of peace and international security.

34. **Mr. Ruiz** (Colombia) said that, as part of its valuable work, the Department of Public Information brought nations together by promoting a shared understanding of the Organization's focus and priorities through the United Nations information centres. The centres had extended their outreach by establishing relationships with television stations worldwide, diversifying audio-visual materials, facilitating access to information for people with disabilities, and training local information officers. The Information Centre in Bogotá had been very active in publicizing the work of the United Nations, having held 18 press conferences in 2011 on topics such as peacekeeping, climate change, human rights, trade and development and highlighted population and environmental issues. Information had also been disseminated through social media, which were particularly popular with young people. The Centre's social mission included programmes on United Nations topics in the schools and poverty-awareness campaigns. Since the Centre served also Ecuador and Venezuela, Colombia recommended that its staff and computer systems be expanded for better coverage of the region. There should always be consultation with host countries before decisions regarding any of the centres were made.

35. Multilingualism must continue to be an essential element in the communication strategies of the Organization, as a way of providing universal access to information and finding creative ways to disseminate it. The aim should be to publish information in all six official languages; and his delegation welcomed the Department's plan to make documents available in over 100 languages through United Nations information centre websites. Colombia, committed to freedom of the press and of expression, welcomed United Nations efforts to disseminate objective, accurate and consistent information in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

36. **Mr. Bamba** (Côte d'Ivoire), welcoming the essential work being done by the Department of Public Information to publicize the major areas of United Nations action, said that among the events covered by the Department, the most significant for his nation had been those leading up to the inauguration of President Ouattara and the restoration of peace in Côte d'Ivoire with United Nations assistance. His country was deeply grateful. The Department should publicize all such success stories.

37. The Department was also an excellent messenger in highlighting the main topic chosen by the current President of the General Assembly for its thematic debate — the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes — a practice the Department should continue. The settlement of the Ivorian crisis had been an exemplary instance of conflict resolution. At several stages, different types of mediation, both domestic and international, had come into play: among them, by the peacekeeping radio station of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), which had reached millions of listeners; by the United Nations, which had certified the 2010 presidential election; and by the national Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which had promoted understanding. The Department could usefully draw attention to the example of Côte d'Ivoire to underscore the importance of mediation in the settlement of conflicts, itself a prerequisite for any economic or social development.

38. **Ms. Chowdhary** (India) said that the role of the Department of Public Information was pivotal in strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization with the greatest public impact, and she welcomed the progress it had made in effectively reaching the targeted audiences. Its Strategic Communications Division and UNifeed had generated considerable public support for peacekeeping operations, for example. Yet information must be relevant and meaningful, and disseminated in a way that was enjoyable. The Department must strive constantly to improve its content management and its coverage, especially of activities that had a direct impact on the lives of ordinary people, like humanitarian action. It should work more closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other

United Nations bodies to provide impartial, timely information on regular peacekeeping activities, while highlighting the success stories.

39. Given the differing technological capabilities of countries, it was essential for information to be disseminated through a broad spectrum of media. Innovative forms of contemporary communication, should be used along with cost-effective, traditional means of communication to reach the widest possible audience. It was encouraging to note the increase in social media followers of United Nations Radio, showing how traditional media could capitalize on new media.

40. The goal should be a more linguistically equal world. It was commendable that the Department produced information in over 150 languages, including Hindi, Bengali and Urdu, but its promotion of multilingualism should be strengthened in terms of parity among the six official languages in the content of the website. It was also important to increase the level of local participation in the production of Department material, but that would encourage local talent to become involved with the work of the Organization. The United Nations information centres, working in 48 languages and maintaining websites in 29 languages, were also crucial in enhancing the public image of the Organization, particularly in the developing countries. The Department must work with host countries to strengthen the centres, and they must be given adequate budgetary resources.

41. The Outreach Division had developed commendable programmes such as the United Nations Academic Impact initiative, for which the University of Calcutta was the global hub for peace and conflict resolution, or the celebrity advocacy initiative, under which Indian cricket star Sachin Tendulkar was serving as Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Environment Programme. The Department of Public Information had India's full support in its endeavour to project the United Nations story.

42. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica), underscoring the key role of the United Nations information centres, said that his Government supported the work of the Centre in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, serving the Caribbean, but believed that it would be more effective if an information officer were assigned to Kingston, Jamaica, to serve the needs of those in the northern tip of the Caribbean.

43. The Rio+20 Conference could be a watershed moment in efforts to protect the planet for future generations. He commended the Department of Public Information for developing a system-wide communications strategy for the Conference, and urged it to build on informed discussions that had been held on sustainable development and related issues and could be held through the network of information centres with local communities.

44. Jamaica was particularly supportive of the Department's outreach to young people which included their involvement under the United Nations Academic Impact initiative, in which more universities from the Caribbean region should be encouraged to participate.

45. The social media were being used more by the Department and that had made the Organization more accessible than ever. Still, his delegation commended the Department for continuing to rely on traditional means of communication, and for having upgraded the United Nations Radio website and its content management system.

46. Jamaica would be working closely with the Department, in collaboration with partners from Africa and the Caribbean Community, to achieve the dual objective of organizing annual commemorative activities in tribute to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, and erecting a permanent memorial in their honour, for which a design competition in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had been launched.

47. His delegation urged the Department to raise awareness of the dangers and impact of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons across the globe. It should publicize the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty and the second United Nations Small Arms Review Conference, two important events to be held in 2012, and an issue of the *UN Chronicle* should be devoted to the question of the proliferation of conventional weapons and the efforts to combat it.

48. **Mr. Al Zayani** (Bahrain) said the Department of Public Information was a sort of mirror that reflected the various activities of the United Nations. It also worked to disseminate information about them. In the context of preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, for example, the Department

was promoting discussion on such relevant issues as forests, oceans, biodiversity and climate change. It had played a similar role with respect to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, the launch of UN-Women and the second celebration of Nelson Mandela Day, all in 2011, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, natural disasters, and the special information programme on the question of Palestine.

49. The United Nations information centres that functioned under the aegis of the Department played a key supporting role in heightening people's awareness of United Nations activities and objectives. The Centre located in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, had undertaken numerous activities in partnership with Bahraini associations, including the organization of a basketball tournament for boys and a soccer tournament for girls. While every effort should be made to narrow, if not close, the digital divide, many developing countries still lacked sophisticated media and thus relied on traditional media for the dissemination of information; and the United Nations information centres were highly useful in that connection.

50. The Department was in a good position to ensure that the benefits of information and communication technologies were available to all; as called for in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2, para. 20). It could do so only by proceeding along the trail blazed by the General Assembly when, in resolution 34/182, it advocated the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order, one based on the free circulation of information and intended to strengthen peace and international understanding.

51. **Mr. Benashur** (Libya) expressed appreciation for the important role played by the Department of Public Information in heightening awareness of the economic, social, political and humanitarian aims of the United Nations, and of its action in areas such as security, peacekeeping, and international law.

52. It was essential to promote the principles of freedom of information and freedom of the press, but it was equally essential to correct the disparities between developing and developed countries with respect to the technical capacities and facilities of their respective media. Narrowing the information and communication gap was a priority issue, one that called for greater international cooperation and assistance to the developing countries in the form of training, capacity-building and technical and human resource development. Yet the traditional media should not be overlooked: they should be developed in step with their state-of-the-art counterparts.

53. Because of the vital nature of its work, it was important for the Department to eliminate disparities and inequalities in its use of the Organization's official languages. In addition, sufficient prominence had not been given to information on certain issues, such as a dialogue between civilizations and the vilification of some religions. The question of Palestine, the suffering of the Palestinian people under occupation and its right to self-determination also deserved greater attention. That said, the training programme for Palestinian media practitioners that the Department organized every year was a highly useful means of developing their capacities and skills.

54. In the twenty-first century, information was of vital importance as a means of shaping public opinion. Libya had seen how dangerous false or misleading information could be, as the former regime had used such information to divide the people and rouse tribal, factional and partisan feeling at the expense of the interests of the nation and the people. Unfortunately, elements of the former regime were still at work, using looted wealth to create anarchy and instability in Libya, with the help of certain States.

55. The Department of Public Information should work closely with national media, organizing workshops, seminars and the like for senior media representatives, regarding the role of information in strengthening peace and bolstering human rights concepts.

56. **Mr. Díaz Bartolomé** (Argentina) said that his country supported the work of the United Nations information centres, so vital in spreading the United Nations message. The Buenos Aires Centre, successful as the Spanish voice of the Department of Public Information, had organized activities including panels, training workshops and Model United Nations, and had also worked with radio, television and print journalists to produce information about the Organization and its agencies.

57. People needed to be able to access information in their own languages, and his delegation supported the commitment of the Department to multilingualism. It was concerned that the latest report of the Secretary-General did not refer to the issue, especially since parity among the six official languages remained a pending goal. The Department had been working on the problem, however, and had updated several thematic web pages and commemorative sites in the six languages. His delegation was pleased to note that the website in Spanish had expanded to become the second most visited page in 2010 and 2011, even though not as much content was available in Spanish as in English. Yet it was disheartening that press releases continued to be disseminated in only two languages. The mandate to disseminate all documents in all six official languages must be respected and lack of resources no longer justified the delay. The Department could perhaps, as a short-term solution, publish all press releases in English and regularly rotate the second language of publication.

58. In respect of traditional media, which should continue to be used along with new media, he commended the work of United Nations Radio in Spanish, and the general expansion of the radio and television services, as well as the digitization of documents to preserve the Organization's heritage.

59. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Department of Public Information, in the course of producing accurate, impartial and timely information about the Organization, should cooperate closely with the Committee on Information, which had an important policy role. He welcomed the celebration of the first International Day of Nowruz and encouraged the Department to continue publicizing the event.

60. The digital divide between developed and developing countries continued to widen. Developing countries suffered from an unjust monopoly over the media by certain developed countries, which distorted or fabricated news, especially in relation to developing countries. The international community should take steps to rectify the imbalances in access to information and communication technologies in order to make the media world equitable and impartial. The Department, for its part, should produce information in areas of special interest to the developing countries, and thus help bridge the gap.

61. The Department had an important responsibility to raise international awareness of the question of Palestine and to shed more light on the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It should also use its worldwide presence to counter the trend towards defamation of Islam and denigration of Muslims and to foster respect for all religions. Promoting dialogue among civilizations and cultures promoted understanding among people, and the activities of the Organization should also foster such dialogue.

62. The United Nations information centres were the interface between the Organization and the international community and were crucial in enhancing its public image. There should be close consultation between the centres and the host countries, and careful attention should be paid to the cultural, social, and economic needs of the regions they served. The centres should be equipped with advanced technology and given adequate resources.

63. The Department's efforts to ensure multilingualism were also important. The Department should continue to produce information not only in the six official languages, but also in local languages that were widely regarded as the roots of great civilizations, including Persian, spoken by several nations in the Near Eastern region.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.